

*the Epithei Romantic.*

which the judgment can ever enforce its authority, were distinctly brought to his view at the same moment with its dictates. In the subsequent hour he had to reflect, that the ideas of God, a future account, a world of retribution, could not prevent him from violating his conscience. That he did not at the critical moment dwell deliberately on these remonstrant ideas, in order to give them effect on his will, is nothing against my argument. It is of the very essence of the fatal disorder, that the passions will not *let* the mind strongly fix on the preventive considerations. And what greater power than this could they need to defeat the power of truth? If the passions *can* thus prevent the mind from strongly fixing on the most awful considerations when distinctly presented by truth in counteraction to temptation, they can destroy the efficacy of the truth which presents them. Truth can do no more than discriminate the good from the evil before us, enforce the inducements to choose right, and declare the consequences of our choice. When this is ineffectual, its power has failed. And no fact can be more evident than that perceptive truth, apprehended and acknowledged, often thus fails. Let even its teacher and advocate confess honestly whether he have not had to deplore numberless times the deficient efficacy of his own clearest convictions. And if we survey mankind as under an experiment relative to this point, it will be found, in instances innumerable, that to have informed and convinced a man may be but little toward emancipating him from the habits which he sincerely acknowledges to be wrong. There is then no such inviolable connection as some men have supposed between the admission of truth, and consequent action. And therefore, most important though it is that truth be exhibited and admitted, the expectations that presume its omnipotence, without extraordinary intervention, are romantic delusion.

You will observe that in this case of trying the efficacy of the truth on others, I have supposed the great previous difficulty of presenting it to the understanding so luminously as to impress irresistible conviction, to be already overcome; though the experimental reformer will find this introductory work such an arduous undertaking, that he will be often tempted to abandon it as hopeless.